



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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attach to an education which restricts itself mainly to the powers of memory.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has eloquently pressed the claims of what we are urging; "if there is a more worthy aim for us than to be drudges," he says, "if there are other uses in the things around us than their power to bring money—if there are higher faculties to be exercised than acquisitive and sensual ones—if the pleasures which poetry and art, and science and philosophy can bring are of any moment,—then it is desirable that the instinctive inclination which every child shows to observe natural beauties, and investigate natural phenomena, should be encouraged."

This touches the moral aspect of the question, and before such an audience as this, little need be said of the moral lessons to be learnt from the study of nature. At every step she teaches patience, trustfulness, and reverence. The more we penetrate her mysteries the more shall we be imbued with the grace of humility. Over all who are in sympathy with her, she exercises a strange humanizing and refining influence. In our darkest hours she may provide a consolation, which can nowhere else be found. When the whole world seems out of tune, and the burden of life beyond our strength, she may revive our drooping spirits.

"With other ministrations thou, O Nature,
Healest thy wandering and distempered child;
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,
Thy melodies of woods, and winds and waters;
Till he relent and can no more endure
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing
Amidst this general dance and minstrelsy:
But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,
His angry spirit healed and harmonised
By the benignant touch of love and beauty."

Nature, too, if in our childhood we have learned to turn to her, will supply increasing enjoyment for our leisure hours. This alone, if there were no other reason, should constrain each of us to spare no effort to lead those for whose education we are in any way responsible, to look to mountain, woodland, sea or stream for refreshment and wholesome recreation, when free from the toil and anxieties of daily life.

At 3 p.m., the Local Secretaries meeting was held, which Branch representatives and members were asked to attend. A short paper was contributed by MRS. R. A. PENNEY (Brighton), on *How to Revive a Dying Branch of the P.N.E.U.*

At 5 p.m. (THE DOWAGER COUNTESS OF NORTHESK in the chair), MISS HELEN WEBB, M.B. (Lond.), gave a lecture to young people on *The Question of Habit*.

At 8 p.m. (MRS. HOWARD GLOVER in the chair), the discussion of Tuesday evening was continued.

The following notes by MR. BADLEY (Headmaster of Bedales) formed a considerable part of the discussion on the subject of the P.N.E.U. Manifesto.* They were read by MRS. FRANKLIN with MISS MASON'S answers.

Section 1.—I wish that some fuller definition had been added of what is meant by *knowledge*, as used by Miss Mason throughout the pamphlet—the more as, for "the man in the street," it usually means *information*; and though in *Section 10* it is expressly pointed out that "information is not education," anyone who had read so far under the impression that knowledge meant information, would have got an entirely wrong impression of the writer's meaning. I could wish, therefore, that at the outset it had been clearly stated that by knowledge is meant something very different from information.

In *Section 4* it is said that "the getting of knowledge, and the getting of delight in it, are the ends of a child's education." This partly does what I mean, by including in knowledge the element of delight in it. But even that is hardly large enough. We do not *know* anything until we have made it completely our own, and can use it. Real knowledge implies power, and the definition of it should therefore include both pleasure in its attainment and pleasure in its use. It is, of course, in the sense of information that, as Miss Mason says in *Section 4*, "educational theorists systematically depreciate knowledge,"—and rightly. But if we once admit that there can be no real knowledge without use and without delight, then all that she says holds good. But in that case, the statement in *Section 1*, that "the principle which keeps

* See October *Parents' Review*, or in pamphlet form from the Office (3^d).

our great Public Schools perennially alive is that they live upon books," comes as a shock to those who are accustomed to see in this precisely their weak point, for the reason that the knowledge aimed at in the public school by the use of books is too often mere information, with little use made of it and less delight in it. It is true that "the best public school boy is a fine product"; he has had the capacity to get something in the end out of the books he has used, and as they are amongst the finest books in the world, he could hardly fail to get something good from them. But it has been in spite of, and not because of, the hideous waste of energy in his earlier training; and at best he has less power and a narrower outlook than would have been the case not only if he had been trained by other means than books alone, but if the books themselves had been rightly used in the earlier stages. Of course I know that with all this Miss Mason is really in agreement. But I think the wording of the first section is unfortunate, as it might easily convey an entirely opposite impression. The real remedy is the one she suggests, that, as preparation even for the proper use of books at the public school, there is need of a wide curriculum, including both *things* and *books* (and, as I should say, things even more than books) up to the age of fourteen, as she says (or of fifteen, as I would rather say), when a narrower and more concentrated course of study may well begin. In fact, I think that the whole subject would be made clearer if one began by insisting on the need of two stages of school training:—one, the wide general course up to about fifteen, and after this age a more specialised course, in which the requirements of the later career ought to be considered. For example, all that she says in *Section 16* is perfectly true if we are thinking only of the earlier stage, but by no means true of the later. And though she has throughout confined her attention to the earlier stage, it would be well, I think, to make the point clear at the outset, or a careless reader might suppose that she meant that there was to be no place in education for the requirements of the special training for the calling in life, and so dismiss it all as "unpractical."

It is certainly most necessary to protest, as she does in *Section 3*, against *early* specialisation, and selecting some

subjects to the exclusion of others, instead of first letting a boy's interests have free play, and so discovering the lines of natural aptitude to follow later.

In reading *Section 17*, I am inclined to stand up for oral teaching, and to plead that it has its use. In many cases I am sure that a child is unable to get much real good out of a book unless he comes to it with some interest in its contents already in his mind, and some knowledge, too, to which to attach what the book tells him. A previous oral lesson gives an opportunity for awaking such interest, and arousing the child's own questions on the subject, to which answers will afterwards be found in the book. Again, I do not doubt that Miss Mason is agreed with this, but her statement, as it stands, seems to me too sweeping, and likely, rather, to puzzle the teacher.

Section 14, on the use of books, seems to me in every way admirable, and I hope that it may come into the hands of very many teachers, as it shows how real books may be turned to most account. There is, however, I think, a need to point out a danger in the use of books, upon which Miss Mason has not touched, and of which, indeed, she hardly seems to me sufficiently conscious. I mean the danger of using books to supply information at second hand in a case where, if our object is real knowledge, it ought to come by actual observation and experience. This seems to me to be exemplified in some specimens quoted in the Appendix, as, for instance, in the account of bees, derived from *The Fairyland of Science*. Surely this would have been ten times as valuable if it represented what the child had actually noticed. And so with other examples given on page 30, which seem to me, I must confess, to show the wrong use of books.

In the same way, at the end of *Section 17* I should like to protest against the statement that "the young shall learn what life is from the living books of those who know." We can only learn what life is by living it; and no course of books can supply the place, for a child, of a life with much freedom and much activity. And this is why I say that in this earlier stage acquaintance with things is even more necessary than acquaintance with books. Books can arouse, better, perhaps, than anything else, intellectual interests, and

are necessary to give food for those finer feelings which are in part intellectual. But for the development of true mental power, as well as manual skill and practical interests, the training of contact with things is absolutely necessary; and in dwelling on the use and the need of books, one must not allow it to be supposed that too much is claimed for them.

These other needs are all allowed for in the summary given in the second Appendix; but even there I cannot help thinking that a little too much is expected in the way of book-work. Your experience must be very different from ours if you find that more than one modern language can be learnt with advantage, as well as Latin, at this stage.

I hope the above notes do not seem hypercritical, but it is just because I am so heartily in sympathy with almost all that Miss Mason urges, and because I feel that it needs to be brought strongly home to all parents and teachers, that I would wish it to be free from any appearance of onesidedness, and from any possibility of misunderstanding.

To which Miss Mason replied:—

I am very much gratified by Mr. Badley's helpful and always courteous criticism. I shall take up the points he makes in order:—

I. (*Section 1*).—The distinction between *knowledge* and *information* is, I think, fundamental. Information is the record of facts, experiences, appearances, etc., whether in books or in the verbal memory of the individual; knowledge, it seems to me, implies the result of the voluntary and delightful action of the mind upon the material presented to it. Great minds, a Darwin or a Plato, are able to deal at first hand with appearances or experiences; the ordinary mind gets a little of its knowledge by such direct dealing, but for the most part it is set in action by the vivifying knowledge of others, which is at the same time a stimulus and a point of departure. The information acquired in the course of education is only, by chance, and here and there, of practical value. Knowledge on the other hand, that is the product of the vital action of the mind on the material presented to it, is power; as it implies an increase of intellectual aptitude in new directions, and an always new point of departure.

Perhaps the chief function of a teacher is to distinguish information from knowledge in the acquisitions of his pupils.

Because knowledge is power, the child who has got knowledge will certainly show power in dealing with it. He will recast, condense, illustrate or narrate with vividness and with freedom in the arrangement of his words. The child who has got only information will write and speak in the stereotyped phrases of his text-book, or will mangle in his notes the words of his teacher. This is why I have said that information is not education.

II. (*Section 4*).—I am entirely in agreement with Mr. Badley until we come to the sentence—"It is of course in the sense of information that educational theorists systematically depreciate knowledge and rightly." This is not my view. I think educational theorists are inclined to attach more importance to the working of the intellectual machinery than to the output of the product; that is, they feel it to be more important that a child should *think* than that he should *know*. My contention is rather that he cannot *know* without having *thought*, and also that he cannot think without an abundant, varied, and regular supply of the material of knowledge. We all know how the reading of a passage may stimulate in us thought, inquiry, inference, and thus get for us in the end some added knowledge.

III. (*Section 4, continued*).—"The principle that keeps our great public schools alive is that they live upon books." Mr. Badley explains this fully when he says that the books that the best public school boy has used "are amongst the finest books in the world." I do think that this fact explains why the great public schools do not die, but are "perennially alive." But I do not use "alive" to mean vital, energising; and I have spoken of their frequent failure to do anything for the average and the dull boy. This failure is, I think, due to the fact that their training depends on "books alone."

I am glad to be in agreement with Mr. Badley in thinking that the remedy lies partly in due preparation and partly in a wide curriculum, including both *things* and *books*.

IV. (*Section 4 continued*).—I should, however, be inclined to give equal value to things and books. I have not made "things" prominent in our manifesto for two reasons. In the first place, that side of education is occupying public attention almost exclusively just now. In the second place, the P.N.E.U. has chanced to come before the public as advocating

education by things rather than by books; though, perhaps, as a matter of fact, both sides have had equal attention. I think the danger in giving too prominent a place to education by things lies in a certain want of atmosphere; and in the deplorable absence of a standard of comparison and of the principle of veneration. "We are the people!" seems to be the note of an education which is not largely sustained by books as well as by things.

V. (*Section 4 continued*).—I entirely agree that it would be better to carry on the liberal education I have in view up to the age of 15, rather than 14. Also I should join in insisting on the need of two stages of school training, but whether the "requirements for the special training for the calling in life" should be considered in the second stage or in a third stage to begin at a still later age, should, I think, depend on the means and position of the pupil.

VI. (*Section 17*).—Assuredly oral teaching has its uses; indeed, I think those uses were dwelt upon in the first writing of the pamphlet under discussion. We cannot do without the oral lesson—to introduce, to illustrate, to amplify, to sum up. My stipulation is that oral lessons should be like the visits of angels, and that the child who has to walk through life, and has to find his intellectual food in books or go without, shall not be first taught to go upon crutches. And our experience is, as I have tried to shew, that children take to books with surprising readiness.

VII. (*Section 14*).—I am glad of the opportunity afforded to me to speak of the use of books in the very wide field which, for convenience, we call science. I entirely agree that here knowledge should come "by actual observation and experience," as in the case of the children who wrote about spiders, thrushes, twigs. All the same, I think books have two uses in this field of knowledge. Reference books are of value to children when they wish to verify or account for what they have observed; while another class of books (those of Professors Lloyd Morgan, Thomson, Geddes, etc.) give inspiration and a point of departure to the student in search of knowledge. The answer about "bees" is perhaps a case in point. The child mixes what she has seen with what she has read. She could not have obtained all her knowledge from observation, but we may be sure she will miss no opportunity of watching the ways of bees henceforth. I venture to believe this

because the whole is told with the *verve* and vividness which indicates real knowledge. I think these remarks apply to the three answers on page 30. The child has evidently seen and realised the dispersion of seeds, though her attention may have been first called to the matter by Mrs. Brightwen's book. In the answers on a "piece of rhubarb" and on the "eye" I should think a piece of rhubarb and a microscope and an eye from the butcher's had been used, to judge by the vivid impressions the writers seem to have received. If the teaching in these cases depended solely on books, it was no doubt defective and wrong in principle.

VIII. (*Section 17*).—I am not sure that "we can only learn what life is by living it." Poets, novelists and the rest have given us vast help in interpreting "life"; but I entirely agree that no course of books can supply the place for a child of "much freedom and much activity." I have written so much from time to time on the importance of these that I thought I might venture to speak on this occasion only of the use of books in education, but I am grateful for a reminder of the grave danger of allowing it "to be supposed that too much is claimed for them." It has just occurred to me that the title of the pamphlet as it at present stands leaves me open to grave misapprehension. The original title was Bacon's phrase, "Studies serve for delight, etc."; and "studies," in the sense in which he uses the word, was the subject of the pamphlet, written purely to bring to the front a side of education which runs some chance of being overlooked.

IX.—Our teaching of languages is on the lines of all our teaching; we wish to set an open door before children, especially in the matter of the hearing and pronouncing of foreign vocables.

Let me again say how much I value Mr. Badley's sympathy manifested in his careful and thorough criticism.

(*In answer.*)

DEAR MRS. FRANKLIN,—Many thanks for sending me Miss Mason's reply to the criticisms I ventured to make; I have read them with the greatest interest and am delighted to find, as I expected, that we are in complete agreement upon the matters on which I touched; and I only wish that

this fuller statement of Miss Mason's position could be added in some form to the pamphlet, so as to avoid all possibility of those misunderstandings that I feared. I hope that the matter was cleared up in the discussion last week; and I am glad to know that my notes were of some use in this respect.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. BADLEY.

Bedales School, Petersfield (Hants),
November 4th, 1903.

[Another point for discussion has been suggested by a phrase in a paper read at the Conference—that is, the possibility that education by books, upon which I am insisting, should be “superficial.” The answer is two-fold; the appeal to experience, which shows that children taught in this way are *educated*; that is, an obvious intellectual growth has taken place upon the knowledge which they possess. They are also, though this is of less matter, well-informed according to their ages. In the second place, the question is—What are the possible substitutes for the liberal use of books we recommend? These are, the oral lesson or lecture, and the “cram” text-book. I have already tried to show that the latter have no place and the former a limited place in education.—C. M. M.]

This was followed by a paper from MRS. F. G. HICKSON, on

BOOKS.

I have been asked to say a few words with reference to the educational advantages of the books recommended by the *Parents' Review* School curriculum and have much pleasure in doing so.

If however we are to pass judgment on a series of books and declare how far they are of educational value, we must first of all state, as briefly as possible, in what our ideal of education consists.

Those of us who for years have been living under the shadow of Miss Mason, when we give our definition are but echoing what she has again and again affirmed—that education is a life—that its essential feature is the development of character rather than the acquisition of knowledge. How far then are books—any books—necessary to this development of character? If we look back to the Middle Ages—if

we glance even to the lives of our poor people a few generations ago, we shall find that men and women—many of them—displayed elements of character then as fine as any we find now among us, that the increase of knowledge, and the greater facility for its acquisition, has not necessarily made us increasingly better—that strength, courage, unselfishness, indeed all the great virtues, existed then as now, “that in life we are not nobler men, nor braver men in death.” No! books were not an absolute necessity for what we feel the essentials of education—there were always the Great Book of Nature and the lessons of experience—but if books were not a necessity, they were at all times an important means of development and a great and immense pleasure. By their means, men were lifted away from sordid or sad surroundings, by their help they were introduced to the great minds of the world, they were indeed windows through which men could look into the paths of pleasantness, and through their help life was enriched and charm was added to existence. But we live no longer in the Middle Ages—books are no more a luxury, they are a necessity. Even the working man and woman is not permitted to ignore them; a certain number of them are a feature in all our lives. In particular the school book has been forced upon us, whether we will or no. Most of these school books hold no relation to the book of literature to which I referred before. They are in essential merely the means by which an examination can be passed. Get through their examinations and go out of every 100 of our school children will never wish to touch what they term a “dry” book again. But they have learned to read fluently. You have put into their hands a tool without any power to use it well. They have no real desire for knowledge; what has been crammed into their poor tired brains has, they feel, served its purpose already, and they fly for amusement to the lightest of light literature. At the same time our markets are flooded with an amount of trash that is appalling to consider. Much of it is harmless in itself—people will say; so, too, might indifferent sweets be—but if it supplies all the mental nourishment that is given it becomes absolutely injurious, increasing the present morbid taste for excitement and horrors, which our daily papers do their best to feed. Again, how many of our children have